

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for processing redundant electronic mail messages comprising:

receiving [[an]] electronic mail messages addressed to a recipient; and
deleting [[the]] each received electronic mail message if the received electronic mail message is at least substantially similar to an available electronic mail message also addressed to the recipient and if the electronic mail message includes a redundancy attribute appended to the electronic mail message by a sender of the electronic mail message, whereby the presence of respective redundancy attributes causes received electronic mail messages with respective redundancy attributes to be selectively distinguished from received electronic mail messages without redundancy attributes and then deleted.

2-3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the available electronic mail message comprises at least one of a plurality of undeleted electronic mail messages stored in a memory device of a recipient terminal at which the electronic mail message is received.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the undeleted electronic mail messages comprise previously opened electronic mail messages and unopened electronic mail messages.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the deleting is automatically performed if the received electronic mail message is substantially similar to the available electronic mail message.

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7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the deleting is performed upon confirmation by the recipient of the received electronic mail message if the received electronic mail message is substantially similar to the available electronic mail message.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the available electronic mail message is substantially similar to the received electronic mail message if the available electronic mail message and the received electronic mail message have a substantially similar identifier field.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the identifier field comprises at least one from the group of user information, subject information and timestamp information.

10. (Currently Amended) A method for processing redundant electronic mail messages comprising:

receiving an electronic mail message addressed to at least one recipient;

determining whether the received electronic mail message includes a redundancy attribute appended to the received electronic mail message by a sender of electronic mail message;

if so, determining whether the received electronic mail message is redundant with respect to an available electronic mail message also addressed to the at least one recipient; and

deleting the received electronic mail message if the received electronic mail message is redundant with respect to the available electronic mail message, whereby the presence of respective redundancy attributes causes received electronic mail messages with respective redundancy attributes to be selectively distinguished from received electronic mail messages without redundancy attributes and then deleted.

11. (Canceled)

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12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the attribute comprises control information readable by an electronic mail processor and causing the electronic mail processor to perform the deleting if the attribute is included with the received electronic mail message.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12 wherein the control information is embedded in a header of the received electronic mail message.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the available electronic mail message is substantially similar to the received electronic mail message if the available electronic mail message and the received electronic mail message have a substantially similar identifier field.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the identifier field comprises at least one from the group of user information, subject information and timestamp information.

16-18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for processing redundant electronic mail messages comprising:

a memory for storing an electronic mail program; and
a processing unit, coupled to the memory, for executing the electronic mail program retrieved from the memory, receiving an electronic mail message addressed to a recipient, and deleting the received electronic mail message if the received electronic mail message is at least substantially similar to an available electronic mail message also addressed to the recipient and if the received electronic mail message includes a redundancy attribute appended to the received electronic mail message by a sender of the received electronic mail message, whereby the presence of respective redundancy attributes causes received electronic mail messages with respective redundancy

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attributes to be selectively distinguished from received electronic mail messages without redundancy attributes and then deleted .

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19 further comprising a display unit, coupled to the processing unit, for displaying the available electronic mail message.

21. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium storing a software program that, when executed by a computer, causes the computer to perform a method comprising:

receiving an electronic mail message addressed to a recipient;

determining whether the received electronic mail message includes a redundancy attribute appended to the received electronic mail message by a sender of received electronic mail message; and

if so, deleting the received electronic mail message if the received electronic mail message is at least substantially similar to an available electronic mail message also addressed to the recipient, whereby the presence of respective redundancy attributes causes received electronic mail messages with respective redundancy attributes to be selectively distinguished from received electronic mail messages without redundancy attributes and then deleted.

22. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 21 wherein the deleting comprises determining whether the received electronic mail message was substantially unaltered by a sender of the received electronic mail message.

23. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 22 wherein the deleting comprises:

flagging the received electronic mail message if the received electronic mail message was substantially unaltered by a sender of the received electronic mail message; and

deleting the flagged electronic mail message.

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24. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 21 wherein the available electronic mail message comprises at least one of a plurality of undeleted electronic mail messages stored in a memory device of the recipient terminal.

25. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 24 wherein the undeleted electronic mail messages comprise previously opened electronic mail messages and unopened electronic mail messages.

26. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 21 wherein the deleting is automatically performed if the received electronic mail message is substantially similar to the available electronic mail message.

27. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 21 wherein the deleting is performed upon confirmation by the recipient of the received electronic mail message if the received electronic mail message is substantially similar to the available electronic mail message.

28. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 21 wherein the available electronic mail message is substantially similar to the received electronic mail message if the available electronic mail message and the received electronic mail message have a substantially similar identifier field.

29. (Original) The computer readable medium of claim 28 wherein the identifier field comprises at least one from the group of user information, subject information and timestamp information.

30. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing outbound electronic mail messages at a sending computer to identify redundant electronic mail messages addressed to a recipient, comprising:

launching an electronic mail message program on the sending computer;
receiving input for an electronic mail message addressed to the recipient;

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appending a redundancy attribute to the electronic mail message, wherein the redundancy attribute configures an electronic mail processor on a receiving computer to determine whether the electronic mail messages is redundant with respect to other electronic mail messages addressed to the recipient, whereby the presence of respective redundancy attributes allows the electronic mail processor on the receiving computer to selectively distinguish between received electronic mail messages that require the redundancy determination and those received electronic mail messages that do not require the redundancy determination; and
sending the electronic mail message.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30, wherein appending a redundancy attribute comprises configuring the electronic mail message with control information readable by the electronic mail processor.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30, wherein the redundancy attribute configures the electronic mail processor to delete the electronic mail message if the electronic mail message is redundant with respect to the other electronic mail messages.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30, wherein the appending is performed in response to a user command.

34. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing outbound electronic mail messages at a sending computer to identify redundant electronic mail messages addressed to a plurality of recipients defined in a mailing list, comprising:

launching an electronic mail message program on the sending computer, wherein the electronic mail message program includes the mailing list and wherein the electronic mail message program is configured to append a redundancy attribute to each electronic mail message addressed to the mailing list;

receiving input for an electronic mail message addressed to the mailing list;

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appending a redundancy attribute to the electronic mail message, wherein the redundancy attribute configures an electronic mail processor on a receiving computer to determine whether the electronic mail message is redundant with respect to other electronic mail messages addressed to a same recipient, whereby the presence of respective redundancy attributes allows the electronic mail processor on the receiving computer to selectively distinguish between received electronic mail messages that require the redundancy determination and those received electronic mail messages that do not require the redundancy determination; and

sending the electronic mail message, whereby an instance of the electronic mail message is sent to each of the plurality of recipients defined in the mailing list.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 34, wherein appending the redundancy attribute comprises configuring the electronic mail message with control information readable by the electronic mail processor.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 34, wherein the redundancy attribute configures the electronic mail processor to delete the electronic mail message if the electronic mail message is redundant with respect to the other electronic mail messages.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 34, wherein the appending is performed in response to a user command.